

John Randolph to Andrew Jackson, July 5, 1832, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

JOHN RANDOLPH TO JACKSON.

Charlotte Court House, July 5, 1832.

Private

My dear Sir, Your kind and considerate letter of the 30th of last month was received the day before yesterday, too late to answer it by return of mail: and yesterday just as I was about to answer it, at the hour when your receiving rooms begin to overflow with visitors, (2 P. M) I was, after much previous anxiety and distress, seized with the gout in both feet. It is a very sharp attack. The pain I could endure with a degree of patience that would not disgrace my manhood, but there is an affection of the stomach and of the head and neck that is almost too much for my fortitude.¹ I had intended to set out for Washington on the 6th or 7th so as to get there before Congress should have dispersed, (I wish I could say disbanded,) but of this there is now no hope. My object was to demand redress of a wrong which I have sustained from the Treasury Department and I submit my case to you, Sir, entreating that you will grant it by giving orders to Mr Auditor Kendall to strike my name as a publick debtor from his books.

1 June 26, 1832, Randolph wrote to Jackson: "This is the tenth week of my confinement here within 12 miles of my own House unable to be removed thither. Ten days ago I had strong hopes of recovery but a relapse from taking cold puts an end to any such expectation."

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The circumstances of the case will be explained by my correspondence with Mr Secretary Branch. Briefly, the matter stands thus. When the Concord was fitted out at Portsmouth N. H. the navy agent there put on board of her a quantity of furniture and utensils for my use. Of the existence of this fact I was ignorant until we had been ten days or more at Sea. I then caused the bed and furniture, china ware etc: etc: to be packed up and requested Capt: Perry to transmit them to the U.S. substituting a *cot* as a more appropriate fixture in an American Man of War than a bedstead and curtains. Capt. P. said he would deliver them to the Navy Agent at Port Mahon on account of the U. S. He might have left them with Mr Hunter at Cowes, when he touched there on his return home. Be that as it may, these things were thrust upon me without my knowledge or approbation, and against my consent I am made a debtor to the Publick for property which seems to have been purchased by way of *Job*. I sent Mr Secretary Branch the inventory. What may have been broken by the carelessness, or embezzled by the dishonesty of the Captain's Steward I cannot tell. I am myself personally responsible for two chamber utensils broken in my service.

This conduct on the part of the officers of the U. S. would in private transactions between man and man be deemed highly discreditable, to say no worse. What right has government to force upon me their trumpery goods and make me a debtor and report me as a defaulter against my consent, or without my knowledge? The thing calls for amendment.

In the course of our "intercommunication" (as Mr Jefferson would say) I have expressed myself with a freedom and frankness that became us both, and if I have occasionally put your forbearance to the test it was because I felt the most intense interest in your fame and the success of your administration. My friend Mr Mark Alexander² has informed me of the dilemma in which certain persons in the H. of R. think they have placed you by the passage of the Bank Bill. He adds, "our hopes rest upon the President and I have no doubt he will prove himself equal to the occasion", neither have I. This is the sort of man,

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my dear Sir, to whom you should look for the sentiments of Virginia. The rival Coxcombs who are intriguing to obtain the mission to England have not a feather's weight even in their respective districts, and if I wished to disgust Virginia and disgrace ourselves at St. James's I would send one of them thither. I think I can see the countenance of the Foreign Secretary and of the persons who compose the good society of London at the vulgarity ignorance and impudence of the one, or the pedantic arrogance of the other, equally ignorant of all that it behoves him to know. No; Spain, Portugal, or some of these barbarous sister Republics of ours are the only Theatres where such actors could be tolerated. one of them, to my knowledge, was any thing but your friend and the other never had an attachment except to himself.

2 M. C. from Virginia 1819–1833.

I had no suspicion of Dashiell's being intemperate. The propensity, if not formed has developed itself since Dr. T's death; and I presume his successor could not have observed it. I own it surprises me that the objection should come fr[om the] present incumbent, whom I saw in a most disgraceful paroxysm of drunkenness at Stafford Court House on the day preceding your inauguration. It had been of some days standing and in that condition he was tumbled into the mail cart, telling every body that he was going to Washington to get an office. I had never seen him but once before and if he had not addressed me by name as I entered the *Publick Room* of the Inn, I should have set him down for some of the natives and made no enquiry as to who he was. But I asked Alexander the Innkeeper and he told me that he was a counsellor of Virginia on his way to Washington to procure an office, but that his heels had been tripped up by liquor and he had been detained there two days. In the afternoon he caused himself to be lifted into the mail cart and in that disgraceful condition he was carried towards the Seat of Government.

Let me express my grateful sense of the kind interest you take in my health. I shall struggle hard to get to England this Autumn. If I fail I have no expectation of surviving the winter. Believing you to be of all the persons, who have been or are in the publick eye the

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most devoted to the welfare of our Country and the most ready to make personal sacrifices to her interests and placing the utmost reliance on the fearless Integrity of your character, I shall support you with my warmest and best efforts; and shall continue to feel towards you the liveliest affection and respect. . . .

[P. S.] I fear that our friend P. P. B. will do himself no service by permitting his name to be used by the Coalition, of which I now consider Mr Calhoun to be a regularly installed member. I would greatly prefer any one that has been named to him, knowing him to the very core as I do.

To day I heard from my uterine brother Mr H. S. G. Tucker. He is at Lewisburg holding his court, probably now at the White Sulphur Springs where his letter was dated. I leave others to sound his praises as one of our profoundest Lawyers endowed with a peculiar facility of despatching business and content myself with saying *that he keeps the faith* , most steadfastly.